

# How to File a Complaint

You can file a complaint online at [www.cslb.ca.gov](http://www.cslb.ca.gov), by mail (after downloading a complaint form) or by requesting a form through CSLB's automated telephone system at 800.321.CSLB (2752).

Either way you file your complaint, you will need to send CSLB copies of all relevant printed documentation (no CDs or flash drives). For example, all contracts (all pages, front and back), change orders, cancelled checks (front and back), and any other pertinent information should be included and mailed to the appropriate office below. Failure to provide all printed documentation could result in a processing delay.

For complaints on work performed in Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and San Diego counties, send complaint forms and documentation to:

Norwalk Intake & Mediation Center  
12501 East Imperial Highway, Suite 620  
Norwalk, CA 90650

For complaints on work performed in any California county not mentioned above, send complaint forms and documentation to:

Sacramento Intake & Mediation Center  
P.O. Box 269116  
Sacramento, CA 95826-9116

## CSLB Arbitration Programs

CSLB administers two arbitration programs: a mandatory program for disputes involving alleged damages of \$12,500 or less, and a voluntary program for disputes involving allegations of damage between \$12,500 and \$50,000.

Complaints must meet stringent criteria to qualify for referral to a CSLB arbitration program. CSLB staff will determine whether the dispute meets these criteria.

For more information on these programs, review CSLB's Mandatory Arbitration Program or Voluntary Arbitration Program guides. Both are available on the CSLB website, [www.cslb.ca.gov](http://www.cslb.ca.gov), or by calling 800.321.CSLB (2752).

## Information Disclosure

CSLB provides information about the status of a contractor's license, bond, and workers' compensation insurance, as well as pending and prior legal actions.

For information about a contractor's license or complaint disclosure, visit [www.cslb.ca.gov](http://www.cslb.ca.gov), or call 800.321.CSLB (2752).

If you would like information about pending or prior legal actions against a contractor, visit [www.cslb.ca.gov](http://www.cslb.ca.gov) or call the Legal Action Disclosure Unit at the appropriate CSLB office listed below:

Northern California: 916.255.4041

Southern California: 562.345.7656



### CONTRACTORS STATE LICENSE BOARD

P.O. Box 26000  
Sacramento, CA 95826-0026  
800.321.CSLB (2752)  
[www.cslb.ca.gov](http://www.cslb.ca.gov) • CheckTheLicenseFirst.com

DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

13P-36/0613

## A CONSUMER GUIDE TO FILING

# Construction Complaints



## CONTRACTORS STATE LICENSE BOARD

Department of Consumer Affairs



## Unlicensed Activity

It is illegal to contract in California for jobs that are \$500 or more (labor and materials) without a state contractor license. CSLB actively works to curb the illegal underground economy through stings, sweeps, and prosecution by local jurisdictions.

Homeowners may have little recourse if dissatisfied with a project that was undertaken by an unlicensed operator. CSLB can issue a warning, a citation or refer the complaint to a local district attorney; however, it is ultimately up to the homeowner to seek restitution for damage or repair.

The Contractors State License Board (CSLB) protects consumers by licensing and regulating California contractors. Consumers who have an issue that they are unable to resolve with their contractor can file a complaint with CSLB. One of CSLB's goals is to settle complaints at the lowest possible level with early intervention and mediation.

## Complaint Jurisdiction

Complaints within CSLB's jurisdiction involve alleged violations of California Contractors State License Law by licensed contractors or unlicensed operators for up to four years from the date of a suspected illegal act.

The term "contractor" includes individuals or companies that offer services to improve real property including, but not limited to, home building, remodeling, room additions, swimming pools, painting, roofing, landscaping, plumbing, electrical, heating and air conditioning, and the installation and repair of mobile homes.

CSLB provides help to consumers through mediation, arbitration, referral to other agencies, or by providing information about other avenues for individual redress. Those alternatives include small claims court, and referring consumers with private arbitration clauses in their contracts to the arbitration process. CSLB will take legal action against a contractor, when appropriate, for violations of the California Business and Professions Code.

## How Complaints are Handled

Complaints involving a threat to public health and safety, and cases where consumers have suffered a significant financial injury are given the highest priority. Every written complaint is reviewed to determine if it falls within CSLB's jurisdiction. CSLB also prioritizes complaints based on the order of receipt and available resources and staffing.

CSLB's Intake and Mediation representatives mail a written confirmation once a complaint has been received. A notice also is sent to the licensed contractor to encourage resolution without further CSLB intervention.

### ● Mediation

If the complaint is not resolved by the parties, CSLB may ask for additional information and/or documentation. A consumer services representative (CSR) may call and attempt to mediate the complaint through that conversation.

If mediation is unsuccessful, other options could include referral to a CSLB arbitration program, assignment to a CSLB enforcement representative (ER) for investigation, or referral to alternative civil or dispute resolution methods.

If the contractor's actions were not egregious and the contractor's history does not reflect a pattern of violations, the complaint may be closed with a warning letter to the contractor. A warning letter remains a matter of record and could support further action against the contractor if future violations occur.

### ● Investigation

If the CSR determines that the complaint requires further investigation, it will be assigned to an ER. The ER's investigation will determine if there is clear and convincing evidence to support a violation of Contractors State License Law. The investigation may include interviews with anyone who is involved in or who has information about the case.

### ● Disciplinary Action

A licensed contractor who violates the law can face suspension or loss of their license if found guilty. Citations also may include civil penalties of up to \$5,000 and/or orders to make or compensate for repairs. (If disciplinary action is undertaken, the case is prosecuted on behalf of CSLB by the state Attorney General's Office. The Attorney General is not counsel for the complainant.)

### ● Small Claims Court

An investigation by CSLB does not guarantee restitution to complainants. If your primary interest is to gain restitution, you should pursue the matter in small claims court or consult an attorney. A brochure on how to file a claim in small claims court (for damages of \$10,000 or less) is available on the CSLB website, [www.cslb.ca.gov](http://www.cslb.ca.gov), or by calling 800.321.CSLB (2752). If your damages are more than \$10,000, you should consult an attorney.

If you prevail in a civil or arbitration case against a licensed contractor, send CSLB documentation of the disposition of the case. CSLB will notify the contractor that the license will be suspended if the judgment or award is not satisfied.

